



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE HISTORICAL SOCRATES IN THE LIGHT OF PROFESSOR BURNET'S HYPOTHESIS

By CHARLES POMEROY PARKER

WE will assume that the *Phaedo* gives a true account of the talk which Socrates held with his friends on the last day of his life, and we will examine the consequences of that hypothesis. My obligations to Professor Burnet in this discussion are very great, and also to Professor Taylor. Any one who is familiar with their recent writings will see at once just what and just how great these obligations are, and will notice immediately where I venture to add anything or to disagree in any point.

Granting then the hypothesis about the *Phaedo*, we ask what we learn as to the philosophy of Socrates. We know first that he was interested in the doctrine of Archelaus that primitive animals found nourishment from a milky fluid caused by disintegration (σηπεδόνα, chemical interaction?) of heat and moisture,¹ a biological doctrine. This interest may safely be placed before the military expedition to Samos in 441/0, on which Socrates, aged twenty-eight, went with Archelaus. Secondly we know that Socrates pondered with perplexity the question whether blood, air, or fire was the means (or instrument) of thought, another biological interest. The theory of blood, suggested by Empedocles,² Socrates might have heard before

¹ *Phaedo* 96B 2. I accept the emendation of Sprengel, ὑγρόν for ψυχρόν. He was the editor of Dioscorides, and was himself a biologist. The authority of Diogenes Laertius (ii, §§ 16, 17) seems to have read ὑγρόν. In § 17 Diogenes Laertius says τηκόμενον φησι τὸ ὕδωρ ὑπὸ τοῦ θερμοῦ . . . ποιεῖν γῆν, and the presence of moisture is implied in the earth just afterwards where we read γεννᾶσθαι . . . τὰ ζῶα ἐκ θερμῆς τῆς γῆς καὶ ἰλὸν παραπλησίαν γάλακτι οἷον τροφὴν ἀνείλεως. Perhaps it is for this reason that Diels reads ὑγρόν instead of ψυχρόν in § 16. [*Vorsokratiker*, p. 233, l. 16.] Epicurus, from whom Lucretius probably got the ideas of V, 806-817 (*calor atque umor superabat in arvis — sucum consimilem lactis*, etc.), must have read ὑγρόν. He was much under the influence of Archelaus μάλιστα ἀπεδέχετο, φησι Διοκλῆς [Diog. Laert. 10, § 12]. The corruption to ψυχρόν was easy, palaeographically, and must have taken place very early.

² *Fragm.* 105 (Diels). As Empedocles visited Thurii soon after 444, and was apparently travelling and spreading his theories at that time in his life, knowledge

441. Air as the organ of thought would be suggested by the teaching of Diogenes of Apollonia,¹ which was burlesqued by Aristophanes in 423. Socrates might have been influenced by it earlier, but perhaps not more than ten or twelve years earlier, say about 435. We can hardly throw the influence of Diogenes much earlier than that. Fire at first suggests the influence of Heracliteans, but we naturally look for some marked recent adaptation of the fire idea as an influence on Socrates. Such perhaps we can find in Leucippus. The soul atoms in Democritus are fire atoms, a notion which he may easily have inherited from Leucippus. This notion of fire as the instrument of thought, if it was derived from Leucippus, might have come to Socrates earlier than the theories of Diogenes did.² The theory of the brain as the instrument of sensation and thought, starting from Alcmaeon, could have reached Socrates, in the latter part of the Age of Pericles, from physicians of the time. Possibly we should limit the theory of Alcmaeon to viewing the brain as the unifier of sensations,³ upon which Socrates reflected, allowing thought to take

of his theories might easily reach Athens about 442 if not before. As to the visit to Thurii see Diog. Laert., viii, 52, and Burnet's remarks on this in *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2d edition, § 98.

¹ See especially the passage from Theophrastus quoted in Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, p. 233. We find also here a certain interest of Diogenes in the brain, but it is secondary. As to the time of his influence on Socrates, we must be careful not to place too early a philosopher so obviously eclectic; yet he must precede the publication of Anaxagoras' *νοῦς* theory.

² The question is as to the relation of Leucippus to Anaxagoras. The priority of Leucippus seems possible. When Democritus seemed to Favorinus to accuse Anaxagoras of stealing the theory of *νοῦς* from himself (see Diog. Laert., ix, 35) he may really have claimed priority only for the school of Abdera as believing in fire atoms which were thought atoms and in the *δῖνος*. Of course *νοῦς* really was different in Anaxagoras, had a grander position, and a more powerful one than in the atomic school. One may suspect that Leucippus taught immediately after Empedocles, and that Socrates might hear of him soon after the expedition to Samos, — as early as 439.

³ Notice in Theophrastus' account (Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, p. 101, ll. 13–28), the phrase *ἀπάσας δὲ τὰς αἰσθήσεις συνηρτῆσθαι πῶς πρὸς τὸν ἐγκέφαλον*. This is the gist of the whole account — one quotation from Aetius says *ἐν τῷ ἐγκεφάλῳ εἶναι τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*, but we feel less certainty in anything attributed to Aetius; and Chalcidicus in saying *cerebri sede, in qua est sita potestas animae summa ac principalis* may be misunderstanding the meaning or value of his authorities. But at any rate the theory of Alcmaeon pointed in this direction. The words of Socrates

place by means of the brain. Whatever Socrates may have guessed, he remained in perplexity as to the organ of thought. Growth of the animal body, also, remained a subject for theorizing. At one time he seems to have adopted Anaxagoras' theory of growth, that in the food there were flesh and bones, etc., out of which came greater bulk of bones, flesh, etc., to the man. The question asked by Anaxagoras, πῶς γὰρ ἂν ἐκ μὴ τριχὸς γένοιτο θρίξ καὶ σάρξ ἐκ μὴ σαρκός, need not have waited till Anaxagoras worked out all his theories and published them. It might spread abroad with its answer in philosophical circles at any time in the later Periclean Age. At any rate we get a clear idea of biological interest of various kinds in Socrates, in the first ten or twelve years of the Thirty Years' Truce, from the age of twenty-three to thirty-five. These years seemed to the philosopher of seventy the years of his youth. The words νέος ὢν need not be limited to mean that he was under twenty-five only.

The biological interest consisted in finding causes of nourishment, sensation, thought, and growth; and the causes always seemed to be processes by which one physical condition changed into another; but it was hard to see any compelling reason for any particular belief about the cause in any particular case. Similar difficulties arose about the action of the earth and sky. Prominent among the theories of cosmology which Socrates mentions is that of the δίνη, or δίνος, a notion perfectly familiar in the time of the Thirty Years' Truce, being taught in various forms by Empedocles, Leucippus, and Anaxagoras, and satirized by Aristophanes in 423 B.C. It was familiar years before that date, perhaps before 441 in the form Empedocles gave it which seems to be referred to in the *Phaedo*. Finally, especial prominence is given to questions about number, for instance, what process gives us two when we start with a unit. Such mathematical puzzles were natural in years when Zeno was between forty and sixty years of age. If with Burnet we accept Plato's statement that when Socrates was σφόδρα νέον Zeno was nearly forty, then Zeno's mathematical puzzles might

in the *Phaedo* which follow, however, ἐκ τούτων δὲ γίγνεται μνήμη καὶ δόξα, ἐκ δὲ μνήμης καὶ δόξης λαβοῦσης τὸ ἡρεμεῖν, κατὰ ταῦτα γίγνεσθαι ἐπιστήμην may denote a theory of knowledge developed by Socrates himself on the basis of Alcmaeon's theory of sensation. It seems more to belong to the Socratic school, and was developed further by Aristotle in a well-known passage of the *Posterior Analytics* 99 B 36—100 A 9.

easily have perplexed Socrates at any time in the latter half of the Age of Pericles. Number, cosmology, biology, processes of causation — these would seem to have been Socrates' interests for a good many years after 446 B.C.

The conversion of Socrates by hearing and reading the book of Anaxagoras can hardly have taken place while Anaxagoras was in Athens. A man of Socrates' temperament, in perplexity about the way of developing the doctrine of *νοῦς*, would certainly have tried to go to the wise man and question him. Anaxagoras must have already gone to Lampsacus. The date of his banishment must have been before the Peloponnesian War. The exile was due to one of the attacks made on Pericles by prosecuting his friends. In the midst of the grave discrepancies as to the time of these prosecutions we should note the fact that Plutarch had found among his authorities for the life of Pericles several theories as to the reason why Pericles encouraged the Athenians to enter into the Peloponnesian War, one of which was that the statesman desired to re-establish his power and influence, weakened by the attacks on his friends Phidias, Anaxagoras, and Aspasia. This sounds like the echo of a genuine bit of contemporary gossip, but no contemporary could have thought of it unless the events had preceded the war. They need not all have happened just at the same time. Nothing could have been more natural than that in the years following the finishing of the Parthenon there should have been some reaction against the successful long domination of Pericles. His enemies tried to weaken his prestige by attacks on the character and standing of his friends. Even as early as 435 there might be rumors as to the impious talk of Anaxagoras about sun, moon, and sky. On these Diopeithes hung his prosecution. When the philosopher was exiled, a year or two later there would naturally come the attack on Phidias. And when he was imprisoned and died, Aspasia was perhaps the next, though Pericles saved her and kept his power. If Anaxagoras was banished in 435 or near that time, he was probably about sixty years of age.¹ This probability is important in view of the fact that

¹ If Burnet is right in suggesting that Empedocles was born in 490 B.C. or earlier, we need not place Anaxagoras' birth ten years before that time. οὐ πολὺ κατόπιν τοῦ Ἀναξαγόρου γεγονός says Theophrastus (?) of Empedocles [*Simplicius, phys.* 25, 19]. And Aristotle speaking of Anaxagoras [*Metaphys.* 984a 11], comparing

he seems to have published his doctrine of *νοῦς* after he left Athens. He might have had the idea earlier, but if he was a man slow in publishing results,¹ like Darwin, wishing to test a theory before he taught it, years might pass by until a crisis in his life, and a new residence, and the establishment of a school in Lampsacus, crystallized the theory and roused him to the publication of it. This was likely enough for a man of sixty, much less likely at seventy years. Socrates then at the age of thirty-five, dissatisfied with old views of causation was inspired by the new suggestion and found a new approach to philosophy. The verification of this chronology must be found in the reasonableness of the situation given by it. We repeat therefore. Anaxagoras driven out of Athens by that wave of reaction against Pericles which was caused by the very success of the statesman's policy, being now of the age of sixty and forced by circumstances to review and take account of his life-work, throws into definite literary form his philosophy of Thought as the orderer of the Universe, and publishes the book at Athens. Socrates, still young enough to experience a great intellectual conversion, hears the book read by a friend, and eagerly seizes the great conception, which henceforth rules his life, that Thought is *the* cause.

And now, what do we learn from the *Phaedo* as to Socrates' philosophy of Thought? The whole drift of the dialogue seems to show that he turned to the Pythagoreans for help, using their help, however, in a thoroughly original way. With Anaxagoras' method of handling Thought as the cause he was thoroughly dissatisfied. By himself he could not trace out a system of proving what was best, and therefore to his mind true, nor does he anywhere in the *Phaedo* proceed by this method. The endeavor to make knowledge of the good the centre of his philosophy had failed, and on the last day of his life he did not advise any one to adopt it. The whole doctrine of the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* in Plato's dialogues must have been a development made by Plato on the basis of the hint given by Socrates in the account of his conversion. Socrates himself took another way. Baffled in the attempt to find Thought in the facts of the world by looking at them directly, he

him with Empedocles, says, *τῇ μὲν ἡλικίᾳ πρότερος ὢν τούτου, τοῖς δὲ ἔργοις ὕστερος*. Two or three years' precedence in age will account for these phrases.

¹ May not this be implied in the phrase of Aristotle, *τοῖς δὲ ἔργοις ὕστερος*?

turned to the obvious presence of thought in human words. The words most full of clear thought in Hellas at that time were the propositions of Mathematics as studied by the Pythagoreans. Socrates desired on all subjects to have thoughts as clear as those which were in the propositions of Mathematics, and he felt that then he would be near to the actual working of Thought in things. The whole method of himself and his friends in the *Phaedo* is mathematical. To make an hypothesis, to work out its consequences, to reject it if they are absurd, to accept it if they harmonize with our best hypotheses, — this method is mathematical, as Socrates shows in the *Meno* by his demonstration that the diagonal of a square is the side of a square twice as large. And in the *Phaedo* the hypothesis of which Socrates and his friends are surest is the doctrine of ideas. He might easily have found the beginnings of this doctrine in Pythagorean mathematics, the *idea* of absolute equality, the *idea* of absolute greatness. The Pythagorean physicians may have had *ideas* of absolute health and strength. But with these we find Socrates talking of absolute justice,¹ beauty, heat, and life. We may suspect that Socrates himself had made this introduction of the doctrine into biology, physics, ethics, and aesthetics, and that he hoped to attain the thoughtfulness and security of mathematics in all these lines of thought. It was his first real contribution to philosophy.

But he would soon observe that human grasp of the ideas was weak and uncertain, that there was something which men were trying to say about them and not saying fully. Therefore, it became his duty to try to find definitions which would stand the test of the method of hypothesis. Following the method described in the *Meno* he would try out definitions given by others, or would suggest solutions himself. Xenophon and Plato both represent him as making suggestions himself, and such conversations are consistent with the Socrates of the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. The first book of the *Republic* where Socrates tests other men's definitions of justice, and the second, third, and fourth books where he constructs and tests a definition of his own, may not have been actually spoken by Socrates, but they are consistent with the conversation in the *Phaedo*. The *Protagoras*, the *Charmides*, the

¹ See for instance *Phaedo* 65 D where the *ideas* of justice and goodness are absolutely parallel with those of greatness, health, and strength.

Laches, and the *Lysis*, as far as this characteristic goes, are real Socratic philosophy, though there may be other considerations which show them to be unhistorical. The *Parmenides* on our hypothesis, as we have worked it out, must be unhistorical because Socrates in extreme youth (σφόδρα νέον)¹ could not have discussed with Zeno and Parmenides a theory to which he was not converted and which he had not developed at all till he was about thirty-five.

The acceptance of the *Phaedo* as historical destroys our belief in the historical character of any dialogue which is inconsistent with it. Not even consistency with the *Phaedo*, such as that of the first four books of the *Republic*, or of the *Protagoras*, would prove that Socrates ever actually spoke the words assigned to him in them unless compelling reasons such as Burnet brings for the *Phaedo* applied to the other dialogues. Plato would not misrepresent the last hours of Socrates, but he might develop the thought of Socrates by imaginary conversations in harmony with the well-known method. And when there is a dialogue in which the speaker is indeed said to be Socrates, yet in which the method and doctrines are inconsistent with the *Phaedo*, going beyond it in ways that the *Phaedo's* Socrates could not have travelled, then we certainly have a Platonic advance in philosophy.

Now the only method of finding any truth in the *Phaedo* is the method of framing and testing hypotheses. If any universal is to be proved and known we must try out our hypotheses about it by bringing up facts to test them. This is the only ἐπαγωγή consistent with the *Phaedo*. There is no real induction, no gathering of the truth out of the particulars. But in the *Symposium* we have a method much more like real induction. Long experience with beautiful things and beautiful thoughts reveals the world to the lover more and more as the multitudinous sea of beauty (τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τοῦ καλοῦ — *Symp.* 210D), and at last there flashes upon the mind of the experienced man a beauty higher than any particular beautiful thing. Obviously any idea might be approached in the same way. Long experience of just things would in the end give to one a world of shining justice, and at last, to the earnest lover of justice, there would be revealed an absolute justice higher than any particular experience. Long acquaintance with healthy things, or living things, or hot things would give at last

¹ *Parmenides*, 127 C.

the insight into the real health, the real life, the real heat. There is nothing like this in the *Phaedo*. Socrates on the day of his death has not dreamed of any such approach to truth. Therefore, the method of Diotima's speech to Socrates must be Plato's extension of the Socratic philosophy. Again the *Phaedrus* has the suggestion of an insight into ideas which is given by the love of them. Socrates called himself a lover of men and a lover of wisdom, but there is no sign in the *Phaedo* of love giving insight. The *Phaedrus* as far as this goes is a Platonic extension of the thought of the historical Socrates. The *Republic* in books 5, 6 and 7 suggests a long experience with all good ideas, especially in rational investigation with other lovers of wisdom, as an approach to the absolute goodness. Hypotheses are done away with, and there is a vision of the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*, to be attained by long study and experience. These books, therefore, are Platonic.

Now as to the myths, we must remark that our present hypothesis requires us to believe that the *Phaedo* myth was actually spoken by Socrates on the last day of his life. We thus learn that Socrates was a *raconteur*, a man who loved to tell a tale as the Greeks loved to hear one. But personally I do not find the myth in the *Phaedo* really beautiful. To me it seems tiresome in its length and detail. It has imagination, and a sense of large things, and a shrewd humor in the telling, as in the suggestion that the Mediterranean Sea is a puddle in the real earth, where we human beings live like frogs or even fishes. But high inspiring beauty I do not find, nor should I expect to find it in a man who, however good and however clever, could take that hopelessly *bourgeois* view of making music and poetry which Socrates takes early in the dialogue, when he thinks that he is making music by putting Aesop's fables into rhythm. Whenever, therefore, I find a really noble myth like that in the *Phaedrus* and that in the *Republic*, I say to myself that Plato is, like Socrates, telling a tale, but that the inspiration is wholly his own. And I cannot believe that the historical Socrates ever sat under the waving plane tree and discoursed beautiful poetry. But this particular feeling is somewhat too personal. We shall be on surer ground if we return to the philosophy.

There is a new doctrine of the cause announced by Socrates on the last day of his life to his friends, and it involves a new way of viewing the well-known ideas. Socrates would seem to have pondered it long

and carefully himself, but it was new to his friends. No longer does Socrates treat the *idea* as something outside of the particulars. In the earlier parts of the dialogue the *idea* does seem outside, *παρὰ ταῦτα πάντα ἕτερόν τι* (*Phaedo* 74A). All through these earlier pages runs a strong Pythagorean dualism. But on page 100 the idea is seen to be the essence, the formal cause, of the particular. By what word to describe its relation to the particular thing is doubtful, *παρουσία*, or *κοινωνία* or some other name. But at any rate the essence is not somewhere else, not really separate. The fire carries essential heat and the soul essential life. One verb to describe this is *ἐπιφέρει*. We may call the idea *ἐν ἐπὶ τῶν πολλῶν*, or *ἐν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς*, not as before *παρὰ τὰ πολλά*. The *ἐπὶ* or the *ἐν* gives us the statement of the perfected Socratic philosophy. It was at the last true, as Aristotle said, that Socrates did not make the universals separate. But the Pythagoreans who introduced the doctrine of ideas in mathematics, and Socrates himself in earlier days, and perhaps some follower of Socrates in Megara¹ did. Plato himself, when thinking of the moral struggle, or of the inadequacy of this present world of sensations, might easily fall into dualism, and would not be untrue to the earlier Socrates when he did so. Either way of handling the doctrine might be natural to the historic Socrates, at first strongly touched with Pythagoreanism, and then beginning to feel his way to the essential unity of the intellectual and material worlds, even before he made on his death-day the first statement on record in European philosophy of the formal cause. We can hardly distinguish Socrates from Plato by this criterion. And yet perhaps it would be possible to fix the relative date and bearing of some of Plato's dialogues by observing whether they carried the doctrine of causation beyond that point to which the dying Socrates had carried it. We cannot follow up this particular inquiry now, but I have at least indicated what seem to me some of the most important consequences of accepting, as I do heartily, the hypothesis of Professor Burnet as to the historical character of Plato's *Phaedo*. I trust that in all this I am substantially in accord with the views of both Burnet and Taylor.

¹ See Taylor's *Varia Socratica*, p. 87.